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ABSTRACT

This paper promotes the adoption of the lifetime learning targets that form part of National Education and Training Targets (NETTS) for Lifetime Learning in the United Kingdom. Section 1 defines NETTs as goals for levels of participation in education and training. Section 2 considers the characteristics and current profile of adult learners. Section 3 identifies challenges to be overcome if there is to be a greater commitment to education and training, if individuals are to undertake more learning, and if current nonparticipants are to be attracted into education and training during adulthood. Employment issues considered include the priority given to training and development, investment in training for older workers, core and peripheral workers, and the self-employed. Issues are identified that affect participation in education and training of significant groups presently underrepresented in programs. The section concludes by identifying structural challenges relating to the provision of education and training: curricular/sectoral boundaries, student support, access to guidance, the qualifications jungle, access to assessment, and appropriately skilled staff. Section 4 describes current initiatives that seek to overcome the educational concerns and other difficulties in expanding learning activity. Section 5 outlines 10 steps for achievement of NETTs. Section 6 refines the issues identified into a set of general recommendations and a set of key short-term actions which should be taken by particular players. Contains 69 references. (YLB)

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The Learning Imperative

National Education and Training Targets and Adult Learners

A NIACE Policy Discussion Paper

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National Institute of Adult Continuing Education
March 1993

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A NIACE Policy Discussion Paper

National Institute of Adult Continuing Education

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Introduction

The Learning Imperative is the fourth in a series of policy discussion papers issued by the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education to stimulate discussion and to promote action on public policy issues which affect adults as learners in the 1990s. As the national federal organisation representing the interests of adult learners and those who provide for them, NIACE encompasses within its work and its membership a diverse range of voluntary and statutory organisations. That diversity reflects the very wide range of contexts in which adults learn: something which itself can create problems in seeking coherent planning as well as bringing richness to the adult learner's experience. The three earlier published discussion papers, *Learning Throughout Adult Life*, *Adults in Higher Education* and *Towards a Learning Workforce*, considered some of the issues involved in attempting to encourage all adults to learn actively and made a number of proposals to government, employers and individuals, local education authorities and institutions.

The Learning Imperative is concerned with the National Education and Training Targets (NETTS) for Lifetime Learning. NIACE welcomes the adoption of these targets, which were first advocated by the CBI supported by the TUC, by a wide range of governmental, industrial and education and training bodies.

Having set the targets those bodies must now will the means to achieve them.

In this paper we argue that the targets can only be attained by radical changes in the way in which education and training in the UK is organised and financed. The targets cannot be achieved without extending the 'learning community' far beyond those who have traditionally participated in education and training. NIACE, and others who advocate the interests of adults as learners, have for some years been persistently raising the questions of 'who participates?' to draw attention to the restricted nature of Britain's learning community, and 'how do we motivate the non-participants?' to draw attention to the need to utilise a whole range of learning skills and methods if those millions of adults whose early learning experience has left them alienated from education and training are to be brought back into the system.

All this implies that the practical and psychological barriers to mass adult participation in education and training must now be overcome. NIACE argues here and elsewhere that far more is needed to ensure a skilled and productive workforce in the 1990s and beyond than a continued concentration on job-specific training. The evidence that skills of adaptability, resourcefulness and imagination and the willingness and the ability to learn are the keys to economic success is by now irrefutable; indeed, is enthusiastically endorsed in most quarters. We argue in this paper that this theoretical belief must now be put firmly into practice.

It is our contention that the interests of the economy, of employers, of government and of citizens can come together to create a learning society and

a learning workforce in the UK. While our aspirations as a nation might be more elegantly expressed we are able to accept the targets as a milestone on the road we all wish to follow. We also contend that we know the ways in which the requisite changes can be brought about and that between us we have the means, if only we also have the will.

As with our other policy discussion papers we make a number of recommendations, in this case concentrating on what needs to be done within the next 12 months. NIACE would be happy to engage in discussion or, preferably, in common action to bring about these changes.

This paper is based upon an initial draft by Bob Powell, informed by the advice of colleagues from industry, education and training, the trade unions and relevant government agencies.

The responsibility for its content and the views expressed lie entirely with NIACE and more particularly with myself.

TONY UDEN
Associate Director, NIACE
March 1993

1 What Are NETTs?

1.1 The Need for Targets

National targets for education and training, first advocated by the CBI in the late 1980s (CBI, 1989) with support from the TUC, have recently been endorsed by a wide range of governmental, industrial and education and training bodies. There is thus a common ownership of the set of eight targets as 'a blueprint for the qualified society we need to become in the mid-1990s. They offer a measure of what needs to be achieved if we are to have the skilled, flexible and motivated workforce we need to compete in world markets' (Employment Department, 1992a). The targets have thus been generated out of an awareness of Britain's current economic performance and its economic standing alongside competitor nations. They are an acknowledgement that widescale advances in education and training activity are needed if the country is to prosper: 'we need to run faster just to hold on to our existing competitive position let alone improve it – yet improve it we must if we are to survive economically' (Tony Webb, CBI Director of Education and Training, quoted in Employment Department, 1992b).

The economic case for investment in education and training has been rehearsed in a series of recent policy statements and publications (Ball, 1990; Cassels, 1990; Coopers & Lybrand, 1985; CIHE, 1992; Employment Department, 1988; Training Agency, 1989; TUC, 1989; and others), many of which have suggested radical remedies such as the Training Reform Act to introduce state funding for off-the-job vocational education and training advocated by Professor Richard Layard in the 1992 Annual ESRC Lecture (based on Layard *et al.,* 1992). All have argued that the British workforce is less skilled and less flexible than its international competitors: it is 'under-educated, under-trained and under-qualified' (CBI, 1989).

There is a recognition that a commitment to training varies widely both within and between economic sectors, and that too much of the training on offer is narrowly job-specific. There is widespread support for the view that effectively managed vocational education and training should be regarded as an investment rather than as a cost, since 'a substantial increase in the quantity and an improvement in the quality of training in the United Kingdom would result in increased productivity and industrial competitiveness' (House of Lords, 1990). The Government agreed in the White Paper *Employment for the 1990s* that 'by any measure there is a need for radical reform of our training system. We need to recognise the commercial necessity of reskilling people, and the central importance of linking training plans with business plans' (Employment Department, 1988). In essence, forces as diverse as market pressure for product innovation, more sophisticated customer demand and expectation of high quality, and the speed of continuing technological change all require 'UK plc' to invest more in education and training for future economic survival.

1.2 The Importance of Targets for Lifetime Learning

Traditionally the UK economy has responded to such pressures by investing in 'front-end' education and training, turning to young people to satisfy the joint demands for an increase in the economically productive population and the skills base. Recent sharp rises in both the staying-on rate in schools and the rate of school-leaver participation in college-based learning (see DFE, 1992a, 1992b) while perhaps leading to a more highly qualified adolescent population than hitherto, keep young people out of the workforce for longer. Moreover, this phenomenon accompanies a continuing demographic profile of dwindling 16–19-year-old cohorts until the mid-1990s, which underlines the inadequacy of relying on young people to provide the skills required for economic success. Five-sixths of those who will comprise the UK workforce in the year 2000 are already at work; of these, half finished their formal education before 1975.

Statistics like these confirm the view expressed in the 1988 White Paper that 'employers cannot expect to recruit as many young people ... as they have in the past' and that as a consequence, 'they will have to tap new sources for their recruits' and 'will have to retrain their existing staff to adapt to changes rather than rely on the market for ready-trained people.' 'The aim must be to facilitate access to relevant training and vocational education throughout working life for every member of the workforce, at every level from entry to top management' (Employment Department, 1988). This is even more true five years on.

This socio-economic context has led to the formulation of commonly-owned National Education and Training Targets which give as much emphasis to the education and training of adults as they do to that of young people (see Figure 1). In supporting the targets, NIACE welcomes in particular the attention paid to the education and training of adults. NIACE believes, however, that too narrow an interpretation of the targets based on mistaken notions of 'vocationalism' and misguided attempts to forecast future skills needs in detail would hinder the chances of success.

1.3 What the Targets Mean

The target for employee participation in training or development activities raises the question of what might comprise appropriate learning. Much education, training and personal development undertaken by the paid workforce, such as the learning which takes place at conferences, on visits, through professional, industrial and commercial updating activity, from colleagues or from in-house demonstrations, is not formally organised as a 'course'. These activities, and many organised short courses, do not currently lead to formal qualifications. Similarly, much of the learning which derives from the (often unpaid) organisation and management of community and voluntary organisations is neither formally recognised nor accredited. NIACE believes that all learning activity which is broadly analogous to study for NVQs, GCSEs and A-levels should be regarded as satisfying the NETTs criteria and contribute towards achievement of the targets. NIACE supports

the argument advanced in the CBI's *World Class Targets* (1991) that 'each individual needs to build up the knowledge, skills and understanding necessary for their chosen path in both life and work' and that the learning path – vocational, academic or general – and associated accreditation – NVQs, GCSE/A-level 'or equivalent' – is 'less important than that it happens'.

Figure 1 The National Education and Training Targets

FOUNDATION LEARNING

Higher basic attainment

1 By 1997, 80% of young people to reach NVQ Level 2 (or equivalent)

More higher level skills

2 Training and education to NVQ Level 3 (or equivalent) available to all young people who can benefit

3 By 2000, 50% of young people to reach NVQ Level 3 (or equivalent)

Broad-based skills

4 Education and training provision to develop self-reliance, flexibility and breadth

LIFETIME LEARNING

Increase in participation and in those seeking qualifications

1 By 1996, all employees should take part in training or development activities

2 By 1996, 50% of the workforce aiming for NVQs or units towards them

More higher level skills

3 By 2000, 50% of the workforce qualified to at least NVQ Level 3 (or equivalent)

Effective employer investment in education/training

4 By 1996, 50% of medium to larger organisations to be 'Investors in People'

The focus in the NETTs on qualifications at or equivalent to NVQ Level 2 or Level 3 might be regarded as insufficient. The pace of technological change, employers' demands for flexibility in their employees, and the increasing sophistication of services required by an international market are but three pressures which suggest that those wishing to enter employment, or to progress in their careers, will need higher levels of achievement if they are to succeed. The NETTs must be regarded as a minimum set of targets for a qualified workforce; any temptation for employers and providers to become complacent once the targets have been achieved must be avoided. Indeed, as CBI President Sir Michael Angus said at the UK Presidency Training Conference in September 1992, the Targets should be regarded as dynamic:

> *We do not envisage the targets remaining unchanged until the year 2000. As we progress towards them it may be sensible to think in terms of them being revised, hopefully upwards, in the light of progress. In addition, it may be sensible in due course to add to these targets – a prime candidate here would be the participation rate in UK higher education (Angus, 1992).*

The 'workforce' which needs to achieve these targets must not be interpreted narrowly. As Charles Handy has indicated, people will increasingly come to regard their lifetime as comprising a number of stages, including paid employment, unpaid employment and non-employment, and might choose to live their lives in a way which will involve a number of jobs (Handy, 1989). This trend will render nonsensical current notions of the 'workforce' as being the sum total of those in paid employment or registered unemployed at any one time. The national economy needs individuals not just to survive, but to flourish through a more flexible employability, based on expertise in learning. Most members of the population are, in this sense, members of the workforce of the future. That NETTs targets for a qualified workforce have been set calls implicitly, if not overtly, for an increase in recognised educational achievement by all UK citizens, whether currently in paid employment or not. In order to take account of the growing diversity of working arrangements, the term 'employees' must be interpreted broadly to include all those who work for an enterprise in a range of capacities, and not just a core of full-time staff.

The way the NETTs are expressed could lead to the interpretation that skills training and employment-related education are intrinsically more important than other learning undertaken by the population at large, including those who for a variety of reasons are economically inactive. NIACE aligns itself with the 'growing view among educationalists in Europe that narrow, labour market-related education and training is not the right solution' (McGivney, 1992a). We advocate a general increase in learning activity, and have argued elsewhere that people need to develop their skills, awareness and understanding, and to exercise critical judgement for a range of purposes. They need information to equip them to lead increasingly complex lives in the communities in which they live. They need learning opportunities related to employment, and to achieve personal fulfilment as individuals and as members of families and communities. People will use skills, knowledge and competences gained in one context to enrich their contribution to other contexts (NIACE, 1990). Learning for work and learning for life are not separable activities.

Countless adult learners provide testimony to enrolment in general education classes being the first step on a learning path which 'gives them a confidence and a courage to move on' (the Bishop of Guildford, quoted in Powell, 1992). NIACE therefore argues not only in support of economically-driven education and training for adults, but in favour of the widescale development of a 'learning culture' which supports this by permitting wider access to, and greater flexibility in the content of, post-school learning opportunities. NIACE believes in the vital importance of the investment in human capital, both within and outside the sphere of employment, for the benefit of society. We share Sir Christopher Ball's vision of 'a society where the appetite for learning was as normal as breathing or drinking' (Ball, 1990), where experience and educational achievement are valued by individuals as keys to

personal success, and where members of the population possess a range of broad-based generic skills as well as the competences to work effectively in their present occupation.

A more educated and qualified population will produce not only an improved economic performance for Britain, but also a more tolerant society, committed to active citizenship and a more fully developed democracy. People with good learning experiences seek more, for themselves, their families and their colleagues. The motivation to learn will, in many cases, be a prerequisite of the expansion of the population base from which the workforce is drawn. Only in this way can the achievement of NETTs be accelerated. Motivate those outside employment to learn, and the paid workforce will itself value learning all the more – and vice versa.

In the future, as in the past, there are likely to be social tensions arising out of individual differences. Some members of the population will enjoy the personal freedom to choose where and when they work, whereas others will be constrained to pursue a limited career path by economic, geographical or family constraints. Many will, through family circumstance, take on a 'carer' role. Some, particularly those who have historically benefited least from education and training opportunities, will find it difficult to gain a first foothold on the ladder of employment. What will bind this heterogeneous society is, we believe, the value it places on learning, and the investment made in human capital. Tensions will be reduced if particular effort is made to address the education and training needs of those who have benefited least from schooling. Such action must be taken if the National Targets for Lifetime Learning are to become a reality.

1.4 This Paper

This paper promotes the adoption of the lifetime learning targets which form part of NETTs, and more generally supports the development of a learning culture in the UK. The next section considers the characteristics and current profile of adult learners. Later sections draw upon previous NIACE policy discussion documents, research exercises and development work, including that undertaken as part of the DES–WOED-funded REPLAN programme. They identify a range of factors which need to be addressed to bring about a learning society in which all of Britain's communities can and do participate, and point to strategies whereby challenges to the achievement of NETTs can be overcome.

Progress towards the achievement of NETTs will need to be monitored. This seemingly straightforward task is rendered difficult by the absence of clear definitions of what the NETTs mean; by the time-lag inherent in the analysis and reporting of national statistics on employment, training and education trends; and by the incompatibility of statistics on educational performance as analysed by different government departments – e.g. the grouping of those with 5 GCSEs for DFE 'league tables', rather than the NVQ Level 2 equivalent of 4 GCSEs. For its part, NIACE will continue to monitor trends and developments in education and training for adults, and commit its resources to enhance opportunities for adults, both within and outside employment, to engage constructively and profitably in learning.

2 Adult Learners

The further and higher education system in the UK is in the main geared towards young people with recent qualifications, for whom full-time education or day-release training is the norm. However, as recent DFE statistics show, adults constitute an increasing proportion of the FHE clientele (DFE, 1992d,e). They have always been the main recipients of in-house employment-related education and training. It is therefore important, in developing strategies for the achievement of NETTs, to consider what makes an adult learner different from a school-leaver seeking further opportunity to study.

2.1 Characteristics of Adult Learners

Adult learners are likely to have a number of characteristics distinguishing them from students continuing their education directly after school. These differences make it appropriate that there are separate NETTs for foundation learning and for lifetime learning, and point to potential complications in achieving the latter.

Adults as learners:

- are likely to have a wealth of experience – derived from work and domestic commitments, and from life more generally – which can inform their studies and which need to be taken into account when agreeing learning programmes. Extensive experience might indeed obviate the need for formal study to achieve some qualifications, with credit being awarded for what the 'learner' has previously accomplished. Adults are thus the main beneficiaries of advances in schemes for the accreditation of prior experiential learning (APEL)
- are more likely to want to participate intermittently in formal study because of work or domestic commitments; they therefore need to have their education/training achievements formally recognised in small elements, so that later return to study can build on, rather than repeat, previous learning
- are often constrained in where and when they study by work and domestic commitments; provision targeted at adults thus needs to be available at convenient times and locations, and via appropriately flexible modes of study (including open and distance learning). A significant number of adults will also need other practical support (e.g. with domestic responsibilities or transport) to enable them to study
- are often unclear about their learning needs and the relationship of certain courses to their vocational or other goals. Guidance and assessment are thus extremely important for adult learners, who might also require help in finding and enrolling on relevant provision. Without such support, adult choices of education and training programmes can be inappropriate,

resulting in withdrawal from study, which demoralises the individual learner and wastes teaching and training resources

- usually have complex motivations and objectives in engaging in learning. Adult learners pursue their individual aims, which often match poorly with the structures and learning programmes offered by traditional institutions. Most will express a vocational aspiration when questioned, even when not enrolled on a 'vocational' course
- might have relatively negative past experience of the education system and as a consequence need to be persuaded back into learning. Once there, adults will often need on-course support, either in gaining self-confidence as learners, developing (or rediscovering) study skills, or both. Some will feel threatened by the notion of assessment if introduced too early
- participate voluntarily. This often makes them among the keenest students but also gives them the power to reject what they are offered if it fails to convince them of its relevance or its 'value for money'.

If adults are to be brought into education and training in larger numbers (and retained) they will require learning programmes designed to their individual needs and are unlikely to be satisfied with traditional teaching methods.

2.2 Current Adult Learners

This is not to deny the extent of current adult participation in education and training. Recent NIACE research (Sargant, 1991) indicates that some 25% of UK adults are either currently studying or have undertaken a course of study within the previous three years; a further 10% report themselves as undertaking informal learning. Of those who are not current or recent learners, 27% said they wanted to be. There is, then, a strong baseline of committed adult learners – and the commitment is shown in survey findings of adult learners that the average length of study is 9.3 hours per week, with over half those questioned (54%) reporting they had been studying for more than six months – on which future expansion of education and training can build.

Survey findings suggest that some 31% of adult men are, or recently have been, active learners, while the figure for adult women is 27%. When put against the known profile of enrolment in LEA-maintained 'adult education' classes, where the male:female ratio is 3:7, this more general figure suggests strongly that men undertake significantly more college- or work-based education and training than do women. General figures from the NIACE survey (not, unfortunately, available by gender) indicate that of those adults reporting an active involvement in study:

- 39% report studying at an educational establishment
- 39% report studying at home
- 15% report studying at work
- 7% report studying at a training centre.

A more detailed breakdown of available statistics on adult learners suggests a strong correlation between social class and study as an adult:

- 42% of people in social class AB report themselves as learners
- 37% of people in social class C1 report themselves as learners
- 29% of people in social class C2 report themselves as learners
- 17% of people in social class DE report themselves as learners.

The extent to which people stayed on at school also displays a relationship with a preparedness to learn as an adult: 46% of those who left initial education at age 18-plus had enrolled in formal learning within the three years prior to the survey date; for those who left initial education at age 16/17 the proportion studying as adults falls to 33%; most tellingly, only 13% of those who left school at the earliest opportunity are likely to engage in formal study as an adult.

In summary, adults currently/recently engaged in formal study tend to be those from skilled and middle-class backgrounds who benefited most from initial education. This significant minority of adults who year after year willingly and enthusiastically engage in study are, essentially, the 'already committed', who will engage in some form of learning because of the value they attach to such activity. By themselves, they are not enough to fulfil the NETTs for lifetime learning. Expansion in adult participation in education and training – which, NIACE believes, is necessary for the achievement of the national targets for lifelong learning – will only be achieved through the recruitment of those others who traditionally have been much less willing to participate.

In this sense, the difficult tasks lie ahead, since strategies for the recruitment and motivation of traditional non-participants are likely to be complex and require a willingness to change traditional practices which has significant resource and staffing implications for education and training providers. The task will not be achieved by a 'quick fix'.

3 Involving All Britain's Communities

The National Targets are acknowledged as ambitious, and publications promoting them are understandably inclined to stress recent achievements, rather than emphasise the distance still to go. Thus in respect of foundation learning targets attention is drawn to:

> *the number of young people staying on and gaining GCSEs [which] is increasing. And achieving one target could make a major contribution to achieving others. For instance 80% of young people achieving Level 2 should in itself significantly increase the number going on to Level 3. In time this would increase the proportion of the whole workforce at Level 3. So there are positive trends to build on (Employment Department, 1992b).*

As Table 3.1 suggests, however, the rate of progress towards achievement of the lifetime learning targets needs to accelerate rapidly.

Agencies which have 'signed up' to the NETTs initiative are now devising action plans to reflect local strategies for translating the National Targets from an aspiration into a reality. Other organisations not yet formally committed to the Targets will also need to contribute: their annual business/development plans should be geared to an investment in human capital which will help progress towards the NETTs for lifetime learning.

Not all organisations will be starting from the same point. Some will start from a low baseline, and might dismiss the NETTs benchmark as unrealistic, while those well above average might become complacent. NIACE believes that all agencies should set themselves realistically attainable goals for increasing opportunities for adults to participate in education and training, and to have their learning achievements recognised. Local targets are probably best articulated as an 'annual improvement' on current activity; the rate of year-on-year progress should be at the level identified in the table. Depending on national progress made towards the goals identified in the NETTs, it might be appropriate to reward those organisations who year-on-year achieve a proportionately higher rate of advancement; certainly they should be held up as examples of what can be achieved.

There are, NIACE believes, a number of reasons why it might be difficult to achieve this necessary acceleration. This section identifies some of the challenges to be overcome if there is to be a greater commitment to education and training, individuals are to undertake more learning, and current non-participants are to be attracted into education and training at various points in their adult life, and by a range of opportunities. NIACE agrees with the conclusions reached by a House of Lords Select Committee enquiry into Vocational Training and Re-training that 'there has to be a change in the cultural perception of training and the way it is carried out if more employers are to be encouraged to become good trainers', and that 'exhortation is not

enough to provide the skills revolution that is needed in the United Kingdom' (House of Lords, 1990).

Only by taking action to meet the many challenges confronting the achievement of the NETTs for Lifetime Learning will Britain prosper economically and socially.

Table 3.1 Progress needed to achieve national targets for lifetime learning

	Lifetime learning targets	Position in 1986	Position in 1992	Target (Year)	Improvements
1.	By 1996, all employees should take part in training or development activities	less than 50%	55–63% (estimate)	100% (1996)	at least 8% per year
2.	By 1996, 50% of the workforce aiming for new NVQs or units towards them	less than 50%	28–32% (estimate)	50% (1996)	at least 5% per year
3.	By 2000, 50% of the workforce qualified to at least NVQ 3 (or its academic equivalent)	27%	just over 30%	50% (2000)	at least 2% per year
4.	By 1996, 50% of medium and larger organisations to be Investors in People	n/a	0.3% have achieved liP; 20% are formally committed	50% (1996)	at least 5% a year in number of firms formally committed; all those committed to achieve liP status

Note: 1986/1992 figures on percentage of workforce qualified to NVQ 3 relate to recognised vocational qualifications, since the NVQ framework is still being established.

Sources: 1986 figures – *Training in Britain*
1992 figures – *Labour Market & Skills Trends 1993/94; Skills & Enterprise Briefing*, issue 19/92

3.1 Employment Issues

3.1.1 Employment Trends

The labour market has changed considerably in the past decade and is likely to continue to do so. Business and service sectors have expanded at the expense of primary industries and manufacturing. Jobs are growing in higher level occupations such as managers, technicians and the professions but declining in manual occupations. This implies an increase in skills needed. The growth in part-time employment and self-employment is evidence of a trend towards more flexible forms of work.

3.1.2 Priority Afforded to Training and Development

Figures released by the Employment Department confirm that by no means

all firms have a formal training plan or earmarked training budget, and further suggest that the current recession has resulted in a retrenchment in employers' commitment to human resource development, although perhaps not so much as might have been feared given its length and severity.

Promotion of the Investors in People initiative, which requires organisations to develop a training and development plan related to the strategic and operational objectives of the organisation, is likely to act as a spur to the prioritisation of training and development. This, however, must be seen in the context of responses to a recession in the general economy; hard decisions have to be made when the choice may be between cutting investment in training or laying off staff.

Training in Britain (Training Agency, 1989) found that 52% of the workforce had received no training during the year, and that one in five establishments had provided no training at all for their staff. Recent information from the Employment Department suggests that 'training has not been severely cut back by employers seeking to trim costs in the recession, as it was in the early 1980s', though the same report acknowledges 'slight falls' in 1991 and 1992 (Employment Department, 1992c). To what extent this reveals a change in attitude towards training and development by Britain's employers is difficult to judge.

Three-monthly surveys of 350 local employers undertaken by the University of North London for SOLOTEC (South London Education and Training Council *Quarterly Labour Market Bulletin*, June 1992) suggest that training budgets are being increased even though firms are shedding workers. In the context of a declining workforce in the area, this must mean an increase in *per capita* expenditure on training. SOLOTEC is, however, concerned at the implications for the skills gap between those unemployed and those in paid work. SOLOTEC concludes, on the basis of this evidence, that the need to upskill the workforce is now recognised by employers, and that there will be an increase in *per capita* training. A more negative conclusion is that the skills gap between those in employment and those out of work will widen, and that when the economic upturn begins, those currently unemployed will not be in a position to respond to employers' demand for skilled labour. TECs, however, do have some flexibility to expend resources in this direction.

Figures from the quarterly CBI Industrial Trends Surveys, which balance data on employers expecting to increase or decrease expenditure on training/re-training, show that since July 1991 more have expected an increase than a decrease. The trend indicator for the last quarter, while still positive, shows the gap closing between employers expecting to increase spending and those who expect to reduce investment in training in the coming three months, which suggests – the evidence from SOLOTEC notwithstanding – that more needs to be done to convince employers that investment in education and training is a sound business priority.

3.1.3 Investment in Training for Older Workers

Recent figures from the Employment Department show a relative under-investment in the development of older employees (see Table 3.2). This might to some extent reflect a relative reluctance on the part of older

workers to undertake training, which is the interpretation placed on the statistics by some commentators (e.g. Rajan, 1992). Alternatively, it might be explained by employers' relative reluctance to invest in these workers, even though an employee of 35 is less likely to move home or job than a younger worker and will still have 20 to 30 years of working life ahead. A further possible explanation is that the figures might be caused by the high proportion of older workers in some low-training industrial sectors. Whatever the reasons for this trend, since it is evident that the supply of new entrants to the workforce will be insufficient to fill the perceived 'skills gap', employers will need to offer more training opportunities to all existing employees, and specifically plan for and encourage their older employees to participate in training, if they are to have the necessary skills-base for future economic success.

Table 3.2 Age and participation in training

Age band	% employees participation in training (spring 1990)	% employees participating in job-related training during last 4 weeks (spring 1992)	
		male	female
16–19	25	27	20
20–24	19	20	19
25–29	17	18	16
30–39	15	15	16
40–49	13	14	15
50–59	9	8	8
60–64	figure not available	4	
TOTAL	20	15	16

Source: 1990 figures – quoted in Rajan (1992)
1992 figures – *Labour Market and Skills Trends 1993/94*

3.1.4 Core and Peripheral Workers

The UK economy has become more dependent on part-time workers. Between 1981 and 1991, 93% of the increase in total employment was accounted for by part-time employees: part-time workers made up 22% of the working population by the end of this period, compared with 19% at the beginning of the 1980s. Forecasts by the Institute for Employment Research at the University of Warwick predict a similar trend throughout the 1990s, with over a million additional part-time jobs by the end of the decade, and the share of part-timers within total employment rising to 25% (Employment Department, 1992c).

Commenting on UK industrial training patterns of the mid-1980s, *Training in Britain* noted that 'changing working patterns will require ... innovatory behaviour by training providers and enlightened self-interest by employers in recognising that concentrating training on their core employees (and relying on traditional sources for skilled recruits) will often be inadequate to meet

their skills needs', but that 'employers concentrate training resources on their core staff' (Training Agency, 1989). Little has changed since then to weaken the force of these observations. Employers have continued to invest first and foremost in the development of their full-time employees: recent figures indicate that 18.5% of full-time employees undertook some job-related training in a given period, compared with 11.1% of part-time employees (Employment Department, 1992c).

Such relative employer under-investment in training the part-time workforce means that part-time workers, if they are to pursue education and training opportunities, often have to fund themselves; and, since part-time students do not qualify for mandatory grant support for maintenance or for tuition fees, there is no direct support for them to undertake formal study. Yet without significant participation and achievement from part-time employees, it seems unlikely that the NETTs for lifetime learning can become a reality. Action is needed on two fronts. Employers need to recognise and respond to the training needs of 'peripheral' employees (and there are sound self-interest arguments why employers should be prepared to do this); and government support of further education and training should be more equitably directed to both full- and part-time study.

3.1.5 The Nature of Firms and Training Involvement

The proportion of employees undertaking training does not vary significantly between regions: in spring 1992, the East Midlands saw the lowest proportion of employee training (13.1%), with the highest proportion (16.0%) being reported in London. There are, however, variations between employment sectors. The spring 1992 Labour Force Survey indicates that, for example, 16% of employees of working age in the service sector received some job-related training, whereas the figure for the manufacturing sector was only 10.7%, and around 6% for agriculture, forestry and fishing. Certain industries thus seem to have proportionately greater difficulty in making a contribution to the NETTs for lifetime learning.

One reason relates to the size of the 'typical' organisation in the sector. The National Farmers' Union, for example, has argued that 'few agricultural businesses are large enough to provide their own in-house training, but given the small size of workforce on most farms time off for training could mean the absence of 50 or even 100 per cent of the workforce in a business where there may be livestock requiring continuing attention' (House of Lords, 1990). *Labour Market & Skills Trends 1993/94* points to the fact that 'those in establishments of 25 or more employees were more likely to have received training than those from smaller establishments' (Employment Department, 1992c).

Relatively extensive training activity in employment sectors reliant on skilled labour (e.g. financial services, where the spring 1992 Labour Force Survey identified 20% of employees undertaking recent job-related training) points to a direct link between current staff capability and investment in training: the corollary – those least skilled are also least likely to receive training – is also true. This is borne out by analysis of training by occupation, which finds that 'employees in professional and technical occupations are most likely to have taken part in some job-related training activity', while plant and machine

operatives are the least likely to have participated in development activity; 'those with no qualifications ... were least likely to be receiving job-related training' (Employment Department, 1992c).

Taken in conjunction with the participation data explored in paragraph 2.2, this all points to the continuing existence of a substantial group in the workforce with little training, limited early education, unlikely to be offered or to voluntarily participate in education and training, vulnerable to changes in the demand for labour and least likely to return to employment once made redundant.

Achievement of the NETTs for lifetime learning will only be possible if relatively low-skilled workers are encouraged to undertake education and training. Organisations employing mainly those who have participated least in education and training will need to address additional problems of a lack of learning confidence leading to slow skill acquisition. For the same reason, government-sponsored initiatives to promote education and training opportunities have tended to target, primarily, those who are most likely to succeed (as was evident under the TOPS Preparatory Schemes, or more recently following the introduction of output-related funding regimes) – such priorities will need to change if the NETTs are to be achieved.

3.1.6 The Self-Employed

Clearly those working for themselves might find it more difficult to find time to study: for many self-employed people it is the case that, 'if you're not working, you're not earning'. Yet the growth in self-employment over recent years (from under 2 million in 1980 to nearly 3.5 million in 1990) places an increased emphasis on the need for this sector to contribute towards the achievement of NETTs for lifetime learning. Statistical evidence suggests that this is not happening. Job-related training is reportedly much less common amongst the self-employed than amongst employees: the most recent published national survey of training activity within the previous 4 weeks (spring 1992 Labour Force Survey) indicates that while 18.5% of full-time employees participated in some form of training during this period, the figure for the self-employed is significantly lower at only 6%.

Two prongs of national policy – promotion of enterprise activity and an increase in learning investment – combine to underline the need to interpret the NETTs broadly. For many self-employed people, learning is an intrinsic part of work. Business activity will mean that new skills have to be developed, new areas of knowledge uncovered. For many self-employed people, there is a close connection between (self-directed) training and the potential for increased income. The test of their effectiveness in making this connection is their continuing solvency – those who recognise that 'when you earn, you learn' will stay in business through developing necessary competences.

Self-employed people have to develop and rely upon highly tuned skills of self-tuition and on-the-job learning to do so. This cannot entirely substitute for directed training, but demands less outlay of time and money for those who would otherwise have to bear the full cost and may have little time to spare. It is vital, if the self-employed sector is to be valued for its contribution

towards the achievement of the Lifetime Learning Targets, that the on-the-job learning undertaken by the self-employed is recognised.

3.2 Social Groupings

'In Britain there is little interest in building up a portfolio of working qualifications; the poorly educated majority do not see adult learning as being for them; and interest in training tails off sharply with age' (Rajan, 1992). This view is borne out by the research: *Training in Britain* (Training Agency, 1989), Sargant (1991) and McGivney (1990, 1992b) map the same groups' under-representation in vocational training, formal and informal education. Working-class people, older adults, people living in rural communities, people lacking basic skills, people with learning difficulties, people working in small businesses and part-time workers participate less. There is evidence that women in general, and people from ethnic and linguistic minority groups, are prepared to invest in their own learning (Sargant, 1991 and 1993), but that employers are less likely to invest in learning opportunities for them. 1992 Labour Force Survey data suggest that the trend is changing as far as women are concerned, but this might well be a reflection of women's dominance of newly-created jobs – 'it is anticipated that by 1995, 90% of all new jobs in the UK will be filled by women' (House of Lords, 1990) – rather than of positive action. Whilst there are marked regional differences in attitudes towards training, with education enjoying higher esteem in Scotland than in England, for example, NIACE surveys suggest this esteem is not followed through into differential patterns of adult participation in education and training.

The reasons for some groups failing to participate are complex. In some cases, the local socio-economic context – such as that of unskilled workers, isolated communities and a lack of transport which typifies many rural settings – will call for a particularly creative and flexible response on the part of education and training providers if participation is to be facilitated (see NIACE REPLAN, 1989). More generally, investment in training is no guarantee of individual career enhancement, particularly at a time of recession. Employers' attitudes and willingness to fund training clearly have a bearing, but as McGivney notes (1990) 'attitudes and perceptions play a significant role in non-participation. Notably, these include perceptions of inappropriateness and lack of relevance; no awareness of learning needs; and lack of confidence in one's ability to learn'. McGivney's conclusion is consonant with Rajan's: 'a large proportion of the adult population considers education as totally irrelevant'. In this context, it is important for those who in some way represent these non-participants (including trades unions and advocacy agencies) to make clear the benefits to be derived from education and training and, where relevant, to put employee development on the negotiating agenda. The TUC briefing paper *Bargaining for Skills* (1992), which outlines ways in which trade union negotiators can take the case for training forward, stems from a recognition of the need to promote the notion of training to both members and employers. Active union participation in Employee Development Schemes helps to promote the notion that all forms of learning are relevant to the development of the workforce.

As Sir John Cassels has pointed out (1989), it is exactly these groups to

whom employers will turn, as the recession ends, to help overcome the problems resulting from the major demographic changes affecting the workforce. Two tasks need to be confronted: to recruit larger numbers of people into planned learning activity, and to widen the groups of people participating – in short, to use Sir Christopher Ball's pithy distinction, more and different.

The following sections seek to identify issues affecting participation in education and training of significant groups presently under-represented in programmes that might contribute to the NETTs for lifetime learning.

3.2.1 People from Ethnic Minority Communities

Table 3.3 Participation in learning by ethnic minorities

	Studying now %	Have studied in last 3 years %	All studying now/recently %
GB as a whole (1990)	13	16	29
Chinese (1992)	19	20	39
African (1992)	36	24	60
Caribbean (1992)	21	22	43
Indian sub-continent (1992)	13	12	25

Naomi Sargant's research for NIACE (1991, 1993) shows that certain minority ethnic communities living in Britain invest in their own education and training in significantly larger numbers than the population as a whole. However, the 1993 study also shows that of those recently studying, strikingly fewer people from minority ethnic communities study at work:

Table 3.4 Learning at work by ethnic minorities

	Studying now/ recently at work %
GB as a whole (1990)	15
Chinese (1992)	2
African (1992)	7
Caribbean (1992)	8
Indian sub-continent (1992)	8

In part this may be explained by the patterns of employment. For example, a high proportion of the Chinese community works in small enterprises in the retail sector, where few people have training opportunities. However, when these figures are taken with the findings of Dadzie's 1993 study of adults with qualifications gained overseas – which shows fewer than 10% employed in the area of their professional expertise at the level of their qualifications –

it is clear that attitude change on the part of employers is needed to match the motivation and sense of purpose of Britain's ethnic minority communities.

3.2.2 Linguistic Minorities

The one sub-group in Sargant's 1993 study with relatively lower levels of participation in education and training are people from the Indian sub-continent, especially those from Bangladesh. This grouping identified English language as a specific barrier to participation. The provision of language support – by both employers and off-site education and training providers – has always been important, and is likely to become increasingly so with the introduction of the single European market and the expected increase in the mobility of labour. It will be important to disentangle language support needs from other vocational training needs if an effective use is to be made of skilled workers whose first language is not English. The development of strategies appropriate to firms working with a European labour force ought to benefit those multi-lingual adults from elsewhere, who have skills relevant to firms wishing to be successful in increasingly global markets.

3.2.3 Women

The Labour Market and Skills Trends report for 1993/94 (Employment Department, 1992c) marks a change from earlier data on women's participation in education and training, suggesting that whilst more men than women continue to receive initial training, more women than men above the age of 35 undertake work-related training. This finding may be explained, in part, by the larger numbers of women entering the workforce after age 35, but it remains surprising, particularly given that 85% of part-time workers are women, and employers tend to concentrate funding on full-time staff (Training Agency, 1989). However, there are comparable trends in rising participation by women in higher education (DFE, 1992c, 1992d), and three times as many women as men participate in general adult education classes, overwhelmingly at their own expense. It has been more problematic to persuade women to qualify and apply for more senior skilled jobs. For many women the 'glass ceiling' preventing access to the higher echelons of company management is a reality, one recognised in the 'Opportunity 2000' campaign to encourage organisations to appoint more women to senior positions.

There is substantial evidence that the principal barriers to women's participation fall into three broad clusters:

- situational barriers such as lack of childcare or inability to meet the fees and other costs
- structural barriers such as poor access to information and guidance and the absence of suitable (sometimes women-only) training opportunities
- dispositional barriers such as lack of confidence or guilt about conflict with domestic responsiblities.

Much work has already been done on ways to overcome these. Women's

participation in education and training could be considerably assisted by the provision of:

- information and guidance that is free from gender bias on education, training and employment opportunities
- women-only pre-training or introductory programmes geared towards building confidence, recognising existing skills, learning about the modern workplace, identifying opportunities and action planning
- certificated training programmes in traditional and non-traditional areas, organised and delivered in ways that recognise women's domestic commitments
- more financial assistance towards the costs of training
- financial support for part-time study
- childcare, and help and advice on finding childcare.

3.2.4 Older Adults

The increase in the numbers and proportion of the population over 50 is a key issue in social policy over the next 20 years. Not only do we all live longer, but many of us retire from our main career earlier, and then look for career change to include part-time work and self-employment. As Schuller and Bostyn make clear in their study of education, training and information for the Carnegie Enquiry into the Third Age (1992), nine out of ten employees over the age of 50 receive no training at all; and training and education are used most by those with the most extensive initial education (20% of people with higher education qualifications, compared with 3% with no qualifications at all). It is also true that the proportion of older workers receiving training doubled between 1984 and 1990. The report shows that a substantial majority of people over 50 disagreed with the statement that 'training is really for young people or those entering new jobs'. It shows that it is 'employers who are often, though by no means always, opposed to training for older workers, because of misconceptions about how far they are trainable and how long they will stay'.

Schuller and Bostyn identify a number of initiatives necessary to improve education and training provision for older adults, notably including a clear statement of policy and the setting and monitoring of targets for participation by government and by employers. Training for part-time employment may need to take different forms for older workers. Recognising prior learning is especially important in making provision for older adults, while their accumulated experience should be capitalised by using older workers as trainers and mentors.

Older adults present a challenge to the achievement of NETTs, since many are unlikely to seek formal certification with a view to job mobility. However, as the CBI and the TUC have been keen to emphasise, the targets identify learning goals expressed as NVQs *'or their equivalent'*. The key to effective skilling of older workers may lie in imaginative development, of programmes of training and study which may not lead to full NVQs. There is a clear and welcome additional benefit from involving older learners in

learning at work: learning is a transferable skill, and can subsequently (or concurrently) be used to prolong fit and healthy citizenship into retirement.

3.2.5 Unemployed People

If Britain is to become a 'learning nation' steps will need to be taken to encourage unemployed people into education and training. Research into ways of motivating low-skilled and poorly-qualified unemployed adults identifies a number of specific difficulties. There is an uneven connection between training, qualifications and careers progression which means many see learning as unrelated to successful employment. Participation in education is perceived as reflecting the values and aspirations of other social groups. There are real negative consequences of long-term unemployment, including a progressive loss of confidence and self-esteem; the deterioration of personal and social skills; social isolation; personal/family stress; a lack of money; and a perceived inability to initiate or control future events (McGivney, 1992a).

By contrast, as Watts and Knasel (1985) identified, education can help in the re-integration of unemployed people by providing:

- a time structure for the working day
- regularly shared experiences and contacts with people outside the nuclear family
- links to wider goals and structures
- a new status and identity (that of 'learner') which, while it may not be seen as a full substitute for that of 'worker', may nonetheless be preferable to the essentially negative status of 'unemployed'
- a stimulus to activity.

In the context of NETTs, it can of course also provide vocationally relevant qualifications.

It is surprising that, as McGivney shows (1992a), there still appears to be an inadequate number of places available on national training schemes. In addition the insistence that most adults must be unemployed for six months before benefiting from these schemes (and that even the most temporary return to employment invalidates time accumulated thus far) ensures that some at least of the de-motivating aspects of long-term unemployment will have set in. The Government-funded REPLAN programme, which persuaded colleges and others to gear their activities towards the needs of unemployed people was, in NIACE's view, ended when only part-way through its task. Initiatives to increase participation by employed people are welcome but must be interlocked with schemes for unemployed people. Many of the motivational, fiscal and other barriers to participation experienced by unemployed people are shared by those in low-waged, unskilled jobs. Indeed they are often those same people at different stages of the economic cycle. NIACE believes government will need to accept continuing responsibility for the skills of people outside paid employment, must expect to meet the bulk of the costs of providing learning opportunities and must take steps to ensure that learning begun when out of work can be continued when in work.

3.2.6 People with Disabilities

The majority of those 3.8% of the working age population estimated (1990) to have an occupational handicap are economically active. Many of them, with or without special aids or equipment, perform as effectively as their able-bodied colleagues. The NETTs initiative thus provides an opportunity for their skills to be recognised and utilised fully in contributing to the achievement of the targets.

Many employers, however, require help in jettisoning inappropriate occupational stereotypes and dismantling wholly unnecessary barriers to the recruitment, retention and advancement of people 'who, because of a physical, sensory, mental or psychiatric impairment, are substantially handicapped in realising his or her potential in the labour market' (Employment Department, 1990). The development of NVQs has not yet prevented industry bodies in some sectors from setting standards which require physical or mental abilities far higher than those necessary for fully competent performance in a given job.

3.2.7 People with Learning Difficulties

The term 'learning difficulty' is used by educationalists to mean a developmental delay in learning which may be on a continuum between mild, moderate, severe and profound/multiple. It has increasingly replaced the phrase 'educationally subnormal' and is increasingly used in favour of the label 'mental handicap' (Sutcliffe, 1990). It may therefore include people falling within the definition of disability used above, but the terms are neither synonymous nor subsets of each other. There is, therefore, a problem in identifying how people with learning difficulties might best contribute to the achievement of NETTS and, indeed, over the extent to which future employment markets can create sufficient jobs to offer real opportunities for choice and opportunities which will allow them to realise their full potential at work without considerable ongoing public support.

Outcome-related funding for training can have the effect of marginalising people with learning difficulties. The performance-related element in the funding of TECs has until now related to the completion of whole NVQs. Since people with learning difficulties may find it difficult to complete a full NVQ in one year (though many will complete units towards NVQs), access to training for people with learning difficulties has depended to a considerable extent on the goodwill of TECs. To change to rewarding TECs for units completed would, apart from facilitating mobility and transfer between NVQs, more effectively measure the progress made in terms of an individual's learning. People working towards units would clearly be contributing to Lifetime Target two. It can also be argued that it helps employers to a more fine-tuned understanding of the skills and competence people with learning difficulties can bring to the workforce. However, it may be harder to satisfy the needs of employers seeking qualified staff who can demonstrate flexible and speedy adaptation to change.

3.3 Educational Concerns

There are, in addition, a number of structural challenges relating to the provision of education and training which need to be addressed if adult participation and the recognition of learning achievement are to be raised to levels commensurate with the NETTs for lifetime learning. The more significant of these are identified below; the section which follows points to current initiatives which seek to overcome these and other difficulties in expanding learning activity.

3.3.1 Curricular/Sectoral Boundaries

The Advisory Council for Adult and Continuing Education report *Continuing Education: From policies to practice* (ACACE, 1982) and the White Paper *Education and Training for the 21st Century* (DES, 1991) drew attention to historic boundaries between vocational education and training, academic study and general educational opportunities for adults. More recent ministerial statements have continued to acknowledge 'a perceived separation between the education of 16–19-year-olds and 'adult education' [which] persists ... despite developments on the ground' (Forman, 1992).

That some aspects of education and training are more vocationally relevant than others is indeed a myth, arising out of a focus on funding/providing agencies' administrative categorisation rather than the perceptions of the actual learners. Ann Risman's humorous account of a political visitor's reaction to students following seemingly 'non-vocational' courses at Richmond Adult and Community College points to individual student motivation which is not straightforwardly classified (Risman, 1991). Expecting students to be studying for leisure pursuits, the politician encountered an out-of-work actor attending voice-coaching sessions in a drama workshop; a redundant company chef following a cordon bleu cookery class prior to setting up his own business; a theatrical seamstress preparing for a difficult professional assignment by attending a local dressmaking class; and a part-time tourist guide taking 'conversational French' classes for career advancement. The inappropriateness of categorisation is also indicated in an early plan for work-related non-advanced further education (WRNAFE) produced by the London Borough of Newham, which stated that 'no sharp distinctions can be drawn [in the FE curriculum]; there is in reality a spectrum including work-centred; work-focused; work-enabling; work-related; academically qualifying; community-related; leisure-related' (London Borough of Newham, 1986). Subsequent national analysis of local authority WRNAFE planning pointed to 'the indivisibility, in planning terms, of wide-ranging provision for those over 19, much of which is valuable in relation to present or future employment and yet defies specific definition in terms of work-relatedness' (Cribb *et al.*, 1989). In the employment sector, Ford UK management's preparedness to negotiate the Employee Development and Assistance Programme with trade unions stems, in part at least, from the recognition that the productivity of the workforce is enhanced by non-job-specific learning entitlements.

The continuation of an academic/vocational divide perpetuated by adherence to the A-level gold standard, and the Further and Higher Education Act Schedule 2 'vocational'/'leisure and recreation' division of the FE

curriculum, are both positively unhelpful in advancing a learning culture, which can only be brought about if all learning is afforded merit – and supported – on an evenhanded basis.

3.3.2 Student Support

Adults wishing to study after a break following their initial education are confronted with a 'range of regulations, rules and interpretations concerning finance which have the effect of excluding particular individuals or groups' (Ames, 1986). Some regulations, such as those concerned with student awards, derive from educational policy decisions at national or local level. Others, like the welfare benefit regulations, derive from other areas of public policy – at European as well as national level – which also have implications for educational access. A key problem is the lack of co-ordination between policy decisions taken by particular central government departments.

Adults suffer disproportionately as learners from this confusion since:

- unlike most 16–18-year-old students, they are charged fees for part-time FE courses
- in HE, Open University students, for example, have to pay for all aspects of study (including tuition fees)
- provision of discretionary awards for part-time study is variable and declining under pressure from other priorities for local authority expenditure
- the '21-hour' concession can in some cases be administered in ways which actually discourage unemployed adults from studying
- national government initiatives to give people direct purchasing power through the distribution of 'training credits' have concentrated to date on school-leavers
- in HE part-time students and all students over 50 are not eligible for student loans
- many adult education activities are once again under scrutiny by HM Customs and Excise in regard to VAT liability.

In short, there is a mismatch between Government's intentions, expressed in its commitment to NETTS and in other ways, and the financial and regulatory framework within which adults seek to study.

3.3.3 Access to Guidance and Advice

> *Every time a learner fails to receive appropriate guidance and enrols for an inappropriate course, teaching or training resources are wasted. In addition, the message is tacitly conveyed that he or she cannot benefit from learning. This is demoralising for the teacher/trainer and the learner, and the effect of the experience, repeated many times, is to produce an adult population lacking in confidence and motivation to learn. If our national economic and social survival depend on the ability of the economy to generate wealth through a better educated and more flexible workforce we must not allow such lessons to be learned.*

> *Helping adults to learn cannot be an optional extra, to be afforded at some time in the future – we cannot afford not to do it (UDACE, 1986).*

Despite the force of this argument, current provision of advice and guidance on educational opportunities for adults remains *ad hoc*. The statutory base for 'helping adults to learn' is tentative, and not necessarily secured through proposals currently before Parliament under clause 33 of the Trades Union Reform and Employment Rights Bill. Overall responsibility for educational advice is unclear while certain initiatives directed at potential adult learners – Gateways to Learning, assessment credits – are either at the pilot stage, or limited to those currently at work. The National Educational Guidance Initiative – jointly funded by the Department for Education and the Employment Department – is being run down after five years. Despite an overwhelmingly successful short-term national helpline during Adult Learners' Week 1992, proposals for a permanent telephone advice and guidance service for adults are only at a tentative early stage. Nonetheless:

> *The Government believes that, in order to meet the skills needs of the economy and the aspirations of individuals, it is important that increasing numbers of adults should have access to good quality careers and educational guidance. Guidance helps people to understand their abilities and potential; to be aware of the learning opportunities which will help them to develop their skills and knowledge; and to make and implement informed decisions about career paths (DFE, 1993).*

Current arrangements for the provision of guidance at a local level do not, however, seem an effective response to this need. Provision of adult guidance is often as an 'add-on' (frequently available only on a cost-recovery basis) to statutory careers services established primarily for school-leavers. Elsewhere, local authority-supported Educational Guidance Services for Adults (EGSAs) have grown up, only to be cut back through pressure on local authority budgets.

Without a comprehensive strategy for the provision of impartial advice and guidance to would-be adult learners, many individuals – especially those who have yet to participate in education and training since leaving school – are unaware of and unable to access learning opportunities. Demand for such advice is evident from an analysis of the activities of 24 guidance services during a 12-month period when funding was available via Educational Support Grants. Findings (see UDACE, 1991) suggest the clients are precisely the type of people who must be attracted into education and training if we are to achieve the NETTS: over 60% of the 25,000 enquirers had no qualifications, or sub-NVQ Level 3 equivalent qualifications; 38% were in paid employment; over 70% fell into the 20–39 age group; the majority (57.5%) were women; a significant minority (8%) had a disability. Services which facilitate the access to learning of such individuals are necessary if the NETTs are to become a reality.

3.3.4 The Qualifications Jungle

By the end of 1992 NVQs were in place for 80% of the work-force, offering a national framework against which individual vocational achievement can be

judged. Further development of the framework is in progress. Sir Bryan Nicholson, Chair of the NCVQ, has recently sought to raise the public profile of NVQs, and has identified a range of development issues including the further piloting of GNVQs and, probably of greatest significance to adult learners, accrediting units of competence (as distinct from full NVQs).

But while developments take place in the accreditation of job-related or narrowly 'academic' study, a fully comprehensive framework for credit accumulation and transfer (using a common currency of credits to enable learners to gain formal recognition for their various educational/training achievements and use these as a set of 'building blocks' towards the attainment of a 'full' qualification) which covers all aspects of adult learning has yet to appear. Evidence from recent UDACE/FEU research into the impact of Open College Networks on learners suggests that, in principle and in practice, acknowledgement of their individual success is likely to motivate adults to study further. Such motivation is essential if the NETTs are to be achieved.

In arguing for the development of a 'seamless system premised on the necessity to create an expansion of 16-plus provision that will enable the citizens of the United Kingdom to pursue further and higher academic and vocational education and professional education and development in a flexible manner throughout their lives', Lord Stockton has stressed that:

> *The most important part of a seamless system is that proper accreditation be given for all forms of training, education and even personal and professional development to allow the maximum scope for individual progression through the credit accumulation and transfer scheme to properly validated qualifications (quoted in Powell, 1992).*

NIACE endorses this view. We are concerned that elements of adult learning remain outside the frameworks being developed nationally. Only through the widest possible accreditation system will public value be placed upon students' achievement. We believe that, in the absence of a fully articulated credit framework, accreditation which relates to learning outcomes analogous to those recognised in the NVQ framework should be seen as a contribution towards the achievement of NETTs for lifetime learning.

3.3.5 Access to Assessment

Recognising adult learning achievement, a prerequisite of the National Targets for a qualified workforce, implicitly calls for easy access to assessment. Frequently, however, adult learning activities do not lead to formal assessment, and certification often reflects attendance on the study programme rather than accredited achievement. Where assessment is offered, it is often only available at the end of a period of organised learning which may be inappropriate to some adults who have already acquired the necessary skills and knowledge in other ways.

Recent NIACE REPLAN enquiries showed that access to many vocational qualifications is not always easy for non-traditional learners (Pursaill, 1990). Certificated opportunities continue to be most accessible to younger people following initial courses or adults in work supported by their employers. There are several reasons for this: some to do with the costs of learning and

assessment, some to do with how colleges or training schemes organise teaching and learning, others are to do with the practices of industry training organisations and examining and validating bodies.

Work is nonetheless being undertaken in industry and in educational settings to develop APEL, the accreditation of prior experiential learning. However, despite some notable pilot initiatives (see Simosko, 1992), more is written about APEL than is presently being done. For people with little previous experience of education and training after school, APEL represents an important mechanism for learners to recognise and value what they already know, and to gain credit that will count towards qualifications. There is also an economic argument for the widescale development of APEL: the direct cost of initial assessment of student capability and providing accreditation on the basis of current skill/knowledge is likely to be less than the cost of putting a learner through a programme of study which leads to the desired qualification. (There is of course the further motivational benefit of the student feeling immediately valued.) This argument is implicitly recognised in proposals from the FEFC that a future funding framework might include a separate element for pre-entry work with students (see FEFC, 1992b). It must be noted, however, that APEL is not necessarily a cheap option if pursued by individual learners rather than groups because of the one-to-one attention that is often required.

Many colleges will need to increase their flexibility in order to maximise their contribution to NETTs:

> *This means reorganising provision in order to provide a range of new services such as initial assessment, accreditation of prior learning/achievement, action planning, individual learning programmes, assessment on demand, records of achievement, credit accumulation, work-based learning and workplace assessment (FEU, undated).*

Practical responses are still patchy, although recent years have seen considerable changes within the system.

3.3.6 Appropriately Skilled Staff

Section 2 showed that adult learners have characteristics which distinguish them from school-leavers. One consequence is that providers of education and training wishing to identify and respond to adults' learning needs, and so contribute to the achievement of the NETTs for lifetime learning, need skills which are appropriate to this adult clientele.

An HMI report on the PICKUP initiative – through which colleges and HE institutions are supported to provide updating courses for those in professional, commercial or industrial employment – pointed to the need for appropriate teaching strategies, and specific skills in planning, marketing and delivering courses for mature learners (DES, 1988). Much of this skills base, at strategic, managerial and classroom level, lies within adult-specific services. As local authority services adjust to the combined impact of the Further and Higher Education Act (which leaves them with reduced curricular responsibilities for post-16 education) and continuing pressure on local authority spending, care will need to be taken that this expertise is not

lost. Current evidence (see, for example, 'Victims of a severed link', *Times Educational Supplement*, 1 January 1993) is that many of these staff at a senior level are leaving the service. They will be expensive to replace and it will not be done quickly, either in FE colleges or in sixth form colleges which intend to develop their services for adult students.

Of similar concern is the likely impact of changes to DFE grants for the development of teaching staff in post-16 education. GEST has hitherto supported a range of initial and in-service training programmes, locally designed to accord with national priorities. From April 1993 earmarked training budgets will disappear in the FE sector, with the FEFC including GEST monies transferred to it in block allocations to colleges. Training in the local authority sector – where there will remain a cadre of professionals who will continue to work in LEA-maintained FE services – will no longer benefit from central grant support. It is to be hoped that both college and LEA service management teams will continue to recognise the need for funded training of staff involved in the provision of adult education and training despite the absence of GEST.

4 What Are Providers Doing?

Most job-related training in Britain is provided by employers (Training Agency, 1989). Some 25% of it takes place in universities or colleges. There is a discernable increase in the use of open learning techniques. Three million people of working age enrol on other full and part-time courses of study. Some 25% of all adults are, or have recently been, engaged in systematic study (Sargant, 1991).

4.1 Open and Distance Learning Providers

Open and distance learning can give the flexibility needed by adult learners and can be the means of greatly extending the opportunities available. Such learner-centred programmes offer choice and control over the timing, place and outcomes of study. Integration with other provision through the use of computer-based teaching, modular programmes, mixed-mode support options, and credit transfer schemes will be essential to meet both the volume and cost-effectiveness required in the future. Open learning is one means of widening the group who can actually participate – 'more and different'.

The National Extension College, for example enrols over 15,000 adults annually on over 125 distance learning courses with added support from a personal tutor. Over 50% of the enrolments come through partnerships with other agencies. Current initiatives include:

- courses for underpinning knowledge of NVQs in administration, accountancy and care
- courses leading to Open College credits for access to HE
- courses to support employee development programmes
- support for courses for the voluntary sector, such as 'Organising in Voluntary Community Groups' for the RSA Diploma.

Other examples of open and distance learning provision include the Open University, whose Open Business School is the single largest provider of high-level business management education programmes in the country, and the Open Learning Foundation (formerly the Open Polytechnic), whose activities focus on the development of teaching materials for use in HE institutions. In addition, there is a wide range of private-sector correspondence colleges. Many large companies, including B&Q, Nationwide Anglia Building Society, Marks & Spencer and Jaguar, and trade unions such as NALGO have invested heavily in the in-house development of open and distance learning materials and provision for staff or members. The recent introduction of schemes outlined in the Employment White Paper *People, Jobs and Opportunity* (Employment Department, 1992d) whereby open learning materials are made available for use by members of the general public in libraries are another positive move towards achieving the targets.

4.2 Employment Sector Initiatives

A welcome and fast-growing recent innovation has been the introduction by some firms of employee development programmes where employees have an 'entitlement' to learning. Perhaps best known are the schemes in the motor vehicle sector – Ford EDAP, Lucas CET and the Rover Learning Business – but many examples can be found in other industries, including Colman's 'Nice Little Learner' scheme and the National Freight Corporation's 'Open College' initiative. Some schemes are negotiated between employers and employee representatives as part of the normal industrial bargaining process and the most successful schemes tend to stress employee participation in decision-making. They are often a mixture of in-house provision and support to attend colleges, etc. (the former being easier for larger companies which may employ or contract their own staff). In one way or another they bring in teaching expertise from public and private sources. Employers' preparedness to invest in employee development programmes stems from the belief that an educated workforce is a more productive workforce. Several schemes place no limit on the area of study – some even prohibiting the use of the learning entitlement on education/training directly related to the current job – on the grounds that an employee who develops a 'taste' for learning will benefit the company through increased motivation, interest and curiosity. Indeed, if providers seek to achieve the NETTS for lifetime learning solely through job-specific training they will meet a simple and understandable barrier: it is unlikely that 50% of the workforce will at any one time be candidates for immediate job enhancement or promotion. Employee development schemes can help employers build up the learning (training) potential of their workforce while continuing to offer job-specific training separately on a bespoke basis. Uptake is high, with employee entitlements often providing the spur to first-time study: over half of Ford employees have taken up EDAP provision in their own time, and 70% of them had not previously been involved in continuing education. These schemes already have the enthusiastic backing of the National Training Task Force, whose Chairman, Sir Brian Wolfson, recently wrote: 'one of the most effective investments a company can make in its future is to encourage and actively support the continuous self-development of its employees.'

Trade unions are also active providers of education and training for their members. USDAW, for example, designs education provision with two groups of members in mind: those who hold office in the union (shop stewards, branch secretaries, chairs and health and safety representatives); and the general membership. The offer includes three- to five-day courses for union office holders and a range of educational programmes (one-week summer schools; four-week advanced courses; open learning with USDAW's own materials; study circles; day courses) for the general membership. The union also supports its members and office holders to participate in TUC short/residential courses; full-time study at an adult residential college (through the 'Chance of a Lifetime' scheme); Open College distance learning; Open University courses; and WEA courses. Informal educational work includes developing members' skills in group work, communication, chairing and organising meetings and confidence building. The USDAW education programme is supported and developed by two national officers and eight divisional training officers.

Such union-sponsored activity, again drawing in that wider group of 'students' who will be needed, should be harnessed to the achievement of the NETTS.

4.3 Training and Enterprise Councils

Each Training and Enterprise Council is unique, serving a particular area with its own local economy and labour market. TEC Boards, made up of individuals from local industry, public sector and voluntary organisations, have adopted mission statements which derive from local market assessments, and have developed plans which address local priorities. They have to date operated within relatively tight financial constraints, and under contracts with the Employment Department which to some extent restrict their flexibility. TECs are, however, responding positively to a number of national initiatives, with pilot stages for Training Credits, Gateways to Learning and assessment credits oversubscribed.

Certain TECs have gone further, and have sponsored local initiatives which directly seek to motivate adults participating in education and training. South East Cheshire TEC, for example, has pioneered adult training credits, and High Street guidance and assessment outlets. Hertfordshire TEC, as well as offering 'guidance vouchers' under the Gateways to Learning scheme, has made available a £200 learning entitlement for each trainee successfully completing an ET scheme. Similar entitlement initiatives are being piloted by South Thames TEC (under the title 'Routeways') and by ELTEC. At another level, the focus has been on using the TEC as an umbrella organisation to bring together a range of interested parties in the planning of education and training opportunities: Merseyside TEC, for example, initiated inter-authority co-ordinating meetings in respect of work-related further education. In Durham, the TEC and the LEA have pooled funds to jointly sponsor development projects delivered by FE colleges, and Sheffield TEC sponsors a local EDAP scheme.

Other TEC initiatives include Open Learning Credit for unemployed people and new ways of paying for training, such as individual training accounts for employees, career development loans and support for the accreditation of prior learning.

TECs are essential proponents of activity necessary to achieve the NETTs. Each Training and Enterprise Council is preparing an action plan outlining local strategy and objectives for progress towards the Targets. That being prepared by SOLOTEC, for example, is presented as 'a shared agenda for action designed to boost participation and achievement. It contains local targets for significant improvements in foundation and lifetime learning over the rest of the decade ... Based upon an analysis of the local community and economy, and the education and training context, the Strategy sets out priority areas for action and programmes to boost achievement' (SOLOTEC, 1993). Through the preparation of such strategy documents, and other targeted initiatives, TECs have a key role in raising and broadening employers' awareness of the importance of education and training and liaising between employers and providers to ensure that training provision helps to develop the learning skills required for the future.

4.4 Professional Associations

Professional associations have a key involvement in setting NVQ standards of occupational competence as contributors to Industry Lead Bodies and as major examining bodies. Membership of an Association provides, in itself, in a significant number of occupations, evidence of qualification or achievement. With membership in some cases spanning a range of industries, they are well positioned to maintain this contribution should current Lead Bodies, of which there are some 200, develop, as suggested, into a smaller number of broadly focused Occupational Standards Councils. One well-known example of a broader programme emerging from a Professional Association is the Management Charter Initiative sponsored initially by the Council for Management Education and Development. Professional associations have also been directly involved in the promotion of continuing education and training, as evidenced by the Engineering Council promotion of a CET Record as part of the PICKUP initiative.

Professional associations may sometimes be regarded as somewhat conservative 'guardians of entry to the profession'; restrictions on membership according to qualification and/or experience perpetuating this image. They can also, however, be proactive advocates of recruitment into the profession from underepresented groups in society, and as such, promoters of the benefits which can derive from education and training. A significant example is the Law Society's recognition of the need for action to address the issue of disproportionately low numbers of black solicitors qualifying for the profession.

4.5 Industry Training Organisations

Government sees the employer-led Industry Training Organisations (ITOs) as having a lead role in setting the occupational standards upon which NVQs are based. They are to identify the changing skill requirement of their sector, and monitor the quality of training provided by employers. Some ITOs provide in-house supervisory and other training courses for companies in their sector; others provide practical training consultancy. Approximately 25% of ITOs act as agents for government-funded training programmes.

ITOs are the voluntary, non-statutory successors of Industrial Training Boards, all but a handful of which (e.g. CITB) have been wound up over the last 10 years. The general view is that whilst the Industrial Training Boards scored some notable successes in the years following their formation in 1964, 'they were not successful in improving training in the United Kingdom to the same level as that of its main international competitors' (House of Lords, 1990). Amongst others, Sir John Cassels has, however, drawn attention to the role of the Industrial Training Boards in the development of group training arrangements, whereby a number of small companies are grouped together to gain access to a professional personnel manager, the cost of whom they share (House of Lords, 1990). The importance of small, medium and large firms in every sector being prepared to make a significant investment in employee development as a contribution towards the achievement of NETTs must raise the question of whether voluntary action will be sufficient. Notions of a

payroll levy, for example, are again being discussed and would in certain circumstances receive NIACE support.

Much depends upon the development of constructive working relationships between ITOs and TECs. The Food Manufacturers' Council for Industrial Training has appointed an officer with direct responsibility for TEC liaison, for example, while the North East Wales TEC has approached relevant ITOs and asked them to nominate member companies to sit on TEC networking groups. This ITO/TEC partnership is sometimes difficult to achieve, given the relatively small staffing level of ITOs, and their need to relate to each of 82 TECs.

4.6 Local Authorities

Local authorities are major, sometimes the principal local employers, and as such have a role to play in the setting and achievement of training strategies for their employees. Many have their own training programmes and direct involvement in the provision of Employment Department-sponsored training schemes. Through their education departments, local authorities have a direct role in the delivery of adult learning opportunities. Local authorities have also traditionally provided financial support for local people seeking education and training opportunities, through fee subsidy for their own courses and through discretionary awards schemes, although currently funding constraints are resulting in cutbacks in both of these areas.

Through local careers services, or via assisted EGSAs, local authorities have been the prime providers of educational guidance to adults. Several have been directly involved in the development and implementation of Open College Networks, whereby aspects of adult learning are afforded accreditation. They are active in the planning and delivery of education and training programmes requiring co-ordination and collaboration between different services. Under European Social Fund grants, for example, local authorities oversee infrastructural, economic and educational regeneration of the local community, including the provision of learning programmes targeted at specific groups. Local authority responses to Care in the Community bring together education and social services, and related agencies in the health and voluntary sectors.

Though losing a large part of their role as direct providers with the incorporation of FE colleges in April 1993, local authorities, as employers, providers, planners, funders and co-ordinators, will remain a prime vehicle, often in partnership with others, for the achievement of NETTS.

4.7 Higher Education

The expansion of mature student participation in higher education over recent years is one of the success stories of UK education and training: the numbers of mature home first-year students in universities, polytechnics and colleges increased by 77% between 1980 and 1990 (from 134,000 to 237,000), and by 10% between 1989 and 1990. A further 38,000 mature learners were enrolled on Open University courses in 1990. Mature students now account for the majority of HE entrants.

The recent increased focus on mature learners has been accompanied by significant curricular development and innovation. The majority of HE institutions now offer a modular programme whereby students can 'pick and mix' areas of study. Systems of access, credit accumulation and transfer have been developed extensively in recent years. Under the PICKUP initiative there has been a proliferation of short courses targeted at employed people in the professions, commerce and industry seeking to update their skills; and HE institutions have pioneered the validation of degrees delivered through employers' in-house education and training programmes.

Some universities have traditionally been recognised as 'responsible bodies' with direct funding to support the provision of 'extra-mural' classes designed to respond to the general learning needs of the local communities. Such universities also frequently have a strong tradition of research in the education and training of adults, and offer postgraduate courses specifically designed for adult educators. The creation of the UFC as a successor to the UGC, and the advent of a 'new HE sector' combining traditional universities and former polytechnics under the HE Funding Council has, however, led to a review of the funding of CET in the HE sector. This review has disclosed the dichotomy of approaches to continuing education and training: the 'extra-mural' or liberal education tradition has been set against a more holistic strategy (evident in many former polytechnics) of delivering courses specifically designed for adults in a range of curriculum areas through subject-specific departments. This latter approach, while 'mainstreaming' adult provision and enhancing the likelihood of student progression, needs to be accompanied by staff development initiatives which ensure that all lecturing staff are familiar with specific approaches to teaching and learning which meets mature learners' needs.

4.8 Colleges

The formation of the new FE sector, comprising incorporated FE and sixth-form colleges overseen by the FEFCs in England and Wales, underlines government policy that colleges are a fundamental engine for the achievement of NETTs. The 1992 Autumn Statement announced a real-term growth in funding, and an expectation that enrolments in the sector will expand by 25% in three years. Such expansion can only be achieved through a sustained effort to recruit part-time and mature learners. It is therefore of concern that, while full-time enrolments have burgeoned in recent years (up 10% in the 1980s), the number of part-time FE students fell by 3% in the year 1989/90–1990/91 (DFE, 1992e). Colleges still have some way to go to change their image from that of providers of initial foundation learning to one of supplying lifelong education and training. Again, the premature ending of the REPLAN programme, which was pursuing this task at least on behalf of the unwaged, seems ill-judged in this context, and the proposals made at the time by NIACE to extend its unit to take in other groups of the 'new' students now needed in FE should be reconsidered.

The shape of FE's work has tended to be determined by the forms of assessment and accreditation that are available. Hence, traditionally, most FE provision has been firmly based on courses beginning in September and ending in July, requiring attendance (full-time, part-time, day-release) in

college, to produce integrated assignments or prepare for examinations. Flexible learning has tended to be characterised by separate off-site 'open-learning' centres with insufficient integration with 'mainstream' provision, and by 'drop-in' workshops (e.g. for learning support in communication or numeracy). Too often it has been seen as an adjunct to mainstream provision.

There is, however, a general awareness of what needs to be done, and many significant developments have taken place: 'colleges are flexible institutions and are already responding in a variety of ways to new circumstances and traditions' (McGivney, 1991). Key characteristics of effective college provision for adults are institutional flexibility, a student-centred approach and curriculum design and delivery tailored to identified employer, group, and individual needs. An adult-oriented service, and one which makes a substantial contribution to the achievement of NETTs for lifetime learning, is best achieved by policies and practices which affect the whole institution rather than piecemeal changes to bits of the system. Colleges are increasingly making provision away from the main site, in employers' premises, outreach centres and in the community (see Kinneavy, 1989).

Some of the best examples of adult-focused learning are to be found in FE colleges, but since they are essentially local institutions the great unevenness in this sector will, if not redressed, act as a brake on the achievement of NETTS in some localities. As colleges take formal responsibility for many aspects of adult education from April 1993 this will become an even more crucial consideration.

A recent HMI report draws attention to the benefits of the college/industry links, which have proliferated in recent years. Most links are initiated by the colleges through formal contacts and through industry advisory groups and college training and liaison units. The colleges benefit directly from additional course income and industrial sponsorship. Involvement with industry has also been an important source of curriculum developments and of professional development for college lecturers. Employers benefit from well-targeted, flexible provision, college publicity, access to specialist expertise and facilities and to well-trained students as employees. Students benefit through a more relevant curriculum, the opportunities for work experience and enhanced facilities. Some exciting collaborative courses and new models of part-time provision have been introduced. These often combine relevant education with approved training; they are motivating to students and help to raise standards (HMI, 1992).

4.9 Private Sector Providers

As significant providers of education and training, especially in particular niche markets, the contribution of private providers to the achievement of NETTs cannot be ignored when monitoring training activity. According to *Training in Britain* (Training Agency, 1989) the extent of private sector training is greater than previously thought.

While private sector colleges and trainers are likely to respond only to attractive market opportunities and to incentives which do not risk their 'bottom line', they have the potential to assist in meeting lifelong learning

targets in areas like management development and language learning, although much learning here is uncertificated at present. In vocational areas such as TEFL, tuition for professional examinations, qualifications for IT and in certain commercial and financial sectors, their contribution needs to be mapped and considered in the development of strategic plans.

4.10 Voluntary Organisations

Some voluntary bodies are primarily educational in purpose (the most prominent being the Workers' Educational Association, designated as an FE provider under the Further and Higher Education Act) others have the provision of education and training as one of their main functions (notably the National Federation of Women's Institutes, the National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders, the Pre-School Playgroups Association); others, including innumerable regional and local bodies, offer training, informal and experiential learning to large numbers of their members.

A major strength of voluntary bodies is the opportunity they give for members to learn through participation in the process of planning and delivering a programme of activities. Learning while sharing ownership of the management tasks of an organisation is a practical and transferable way of strengthening active citizenship, and one which contributes to the wide dispersal of skills in society. That these skills have broader relevance is acknowledged, for example, in the recent piloting – supported by Heart of England TEC – of an RSA Advanced Diploma in the Organisation of Community Groups with groups of NFWI members at Denman College (see Tiernan, 1992; for a more general discussion of the accreditation of voluntary experience, see NIACE REPLAN, 1990); other voluntary sector organisations using the Diploma include Business and Professional Women, and the YWCA.

Working in collaboration with government agencies at national and local level, the voluntary organisations can assist as contracted training providers in areas where they have particular expertise and knowledge of needs. They may be able to motivate groups and individuals normally alienated from mainstream training and education institutions, or who would not normally recognise organised learning as a route to their personal goals. Effective collaboration between statutory and voluntary bodies is essential; such collaboration should recognise the constraints of staffing and remit that may prevent voluntary organisations from sharing the full range of a partner's concerns.

4.11 Collaboration and Partnership

As the preceding description of current activity has sought to demonstrate, best practice in education and training for lifetime learning frequently involves partnership arrangements. This may well be between those needing, and those providing development opportunities – the Business/Education Partnership initiative is a case in point. Links between providers are also important. As well as the dissemination of good practice (thereby reducing

the risk of 'reinventing the wheel' and duplicating effort) close liaison enhances opportunities for planned learner progression.

The experience of many people working with adult learners is that a great number participate in general, uncertificated adult education programmes – both formal and informal – for (sometimes only half-acknowledged) instrumental reasons related to employment, self-employment or voluntary activities; and there is also widespread acceptance that for many adults such programmes provide a 'crucial first step' towards more advanced study, even though that may not have been foreseen or originally intended (McGivney, 1992b). Frequently, however, uncertificated and certificated courses, or courses at different 'levels', are taught in different institutions or sectors. These may have no structural links and may employ different methods of collecting information on student achievement and progression aspirations. If adults are to be encouraged to progress in their learning once they have begun to participate – and NETTs for participation and achievement imply this is an agreed objective – inter-provider links will be vital.

Inter-agency collaboration is also needed at a strategic level. A recently initiated joint venture between the TUC and South Thames TEC, for example, involving the secondment of a senior TUC official, is designed to increase the training opportunities open to union members and so put training and employee development near the top of the agenda in all unionised workplaces. The 'Working in Partnership for Quality Training at Work' initiative aims to increase the quality and quantity of training available by:

- stimulating more union-initiated activity on training
- encouraging joint action between employers and unions on training
- improving the training opportunities open to all employees, in particular women and part-time workers
- strengthening trade union links with Training and Enterprise Councils.

The TUC and the TEC have set a target of doubling the amount of vocational training negotiated by trade unions. The first stage of the initiative will identify the support that local union officials and representatives need to generate more training opportunities locally; the second phase will seek to assess how the lessons learned locally can be translated into action in all TEC areas.

Merseyside TEC works in collaboration with NACRO and local FE colleges to take education and training to outer city housing estates and to align the ensuing informal activity with NVQ standards.

Such partnership initiatives are designed to lead to the achievement of NETTs. Without such collaborative activity, the targets will be difficult to reach.

5 Strategies for Achievement of the Targets

NIACE believes that the challenges to the achievement of the NETTs for lifetime learning within agreed timescales demand the following steps. Suggestions for action stem, in part, from practice identified in section 4 of this paper; other points arise out of past enquiries, research and development work. The issues identified are refined, in section 6, into a set of general recommendations and a set of key short-term actions which should be taken by particular players.

5.1 Analysis of Future Training Requirements

NIACE is encouraged by recent legislative clarification of the notion of 'adequacy' of facilities for further education, which (under Section 3[2] of the Further and Higher Education Act 1992) need to be 'provided at such places, [to be] of such character and [to be] so equipped as to meet the reasonable need' of the local population, and must 'take account of the different abilities and aptitudes of persons among that population'. NIACE believes that all education and training providers in the public, private and voluntary sectors should undertake detailed needs analysis, informed by local labour market information and feedback (both formal and informal) from representatives of employers and other representatives of the community, as well as individuals. Employers should underpin needs analysis with a regular skills audit of staff. In the light of findings, NIACE would recommend that organisations prepare a statement outlining their intentions in respect of:

- the range of education and training opportunities to be made available
- the accessibility of provision, both in terms of location and timing
- the client groups to be served, and the level of participation expected
- the support services available to learners
- the outcomes to be expected from the learning opportunities, including opportunities for accreditation.

Such statements of intent are best presented as a strategic plan for education and training activity in the coming period. The resources – human, physical and financial – which will be required to implement the plan should also be identified. Needs analysis, planning and budgeting lie at the heart of good human resource development practice. Preparation of the HRD plan will stand organisations in good stead in attempts to pursue recognition as an Investor in People.

As indicated, planning needs to be backed up with resource commitment. NIACE welcomes the government's prioritisation of further education and

training, as signified by its preparedness to fund expansion in the newly created FEFC sectors. Colleges are central to the provision of flexible learning opportunities designed to be responsive to the needs of the communities they serve, and are well placed – in collaboration with other providers – to make provision in places and at times which are accessible to would-be adult learners. There remains, however, for example in the Secretary of State for Education's launch guidance to the FEFCE, an emphasis on an increase in participation of 17-year-olds in full-time education and training. NIACE takes the view that the key priority group for expansion in education and training is part-time adult learners, and in particular those who have participated least in post-school learning opportunities to date. HRD strategies and resources for education and training should focus in particular on expanding the numbers and changing the profile of adult learners.

5.2 Setting Objectives and Targets for Improving Training Performance

The National Education and Training Targets for Lifetime Learning are to be commended, and should be formally endorsed. All organisations employing staff or using voluntary labour should review their existing practice and set targets for improvement. TECs are providing a lead in the preparation of strategies for achievement of the NETTs at local level. NIACE believes that, as a minimum, the annual rate of improvement in education and training should be equivalent to that required for achievement of the NETTs and outlined in Figure 1. It is important for organisations to assess the extent of their current activity, and to plan a staged progression. Failure at something too ambitious will discourage further investment, whereas a series of smaller successes provides a sound foundation for further progress.

5.3 National Qualifications and Standards

NIACE believes that more resources should be committed to the further development and completion of a comprehensive framework of credit accumulation and transfer which encompasses vocational and academic qualifications and, crucially, other forms of accreditation which recognise the learning achievements of study in more general curriculum areas. We welcome progress made to date in the development of the NVQ framework, but believe that a comprehensive credit framework should be based on a 'common currency'. We are particularly encouraged by the way in which Open College Networks demonstrate the capability of articulating between different credit systems, as well as providing direct accreditation of more general or individualised forms of educational achievement.

Recent announcements from the Chair of the NCVQ about the development of accreditation of units is to be welcomed. NIACE believes that for many adults the accreditation of small 'blocks' of learning will be more useful than the need to pursue long-term learning programmes in order to achieve full qualifications. A unit-based credit framework also affords the opportunity for short-term, targeted training – much of which currently goes unrecognised –

to be formally accredited, with individual learners being able to build up further credits in future years.

NIACE supports the framework put forward in the Further Education Units's *A Basis for Credit?* bulletin (FEU, 1992) as a platform for development. The force of the argument advanced will, we hope, bring about the voluntary endorsement of the framework which the bulletin invites. NIACE believes, however, that the development of a comprehensive CATS framework is a sufficiently high priority to merit Government intervention should support not otherwise be sufficient.

5.4 Recognising Achievement

NIACE believes a formal record of achievement is a sound motivator which will encourage learners to undertake further education and training. We welcome recent announcements about the extension of the National Record of Achievement handled and promoted by NCVQ, and believe that the initiative should be further extended beyond the school-leaver cohort. Individual records of achievement, based on a national unit-based credit framework, should also include evidence of personal achievement resulting from informal learning and life experience.

In this context, and more generally, it is important to further develop current APEL initiatives, including those which focus on the experience gained through unpaid activity (e.g. in the management and organisation of voluntary groups and through 'domestic experience'). Current work supported by Hertfordshire TEC, for example, in which people with no previous paid employment experience can, on the basis of APEL, be accredited to NVQ Level 3 in 13 weeks is interesting and encouraging. Such initiatives reduce the risk that time and resources will be wasted in putting people through learning programmes designed to impart skills and knowledge which they already possess.

5.5 Assisting Individuals to Make Informed Choices

The economic case for effective advice and guidance services for potential and current learners is made by Killeen, White and Watts (1992), and NIACE advocates a general expansion in this area. The Trade Union Reform and Employment Rights Bill proposes to transfer statutory responsibility for the careers service from local education authorities to the Secretary of State for Employment. It also proposes limiting the duty of the Secretary of State to provide guidance to part-time learners to those who participate in 'education of a description commonly undergone by persons in order to fit them for employment', which risks, if narrowly interpreted, denying statutory guidance services to many of the wide range of new 'students' we argue will be finding their way into education and training if the NETTS are to be achieved. While discretionary powers to provide more extensive services will remain with both the Secretary of State and the LEAs there are some doubts about the extent to which a universal and affordable service could be expected to develop under these arrangements. NIACE will, therefore, be

urging the Government to think again about the necessity of such a potentially limiting definition of entitlement and about the ways in which those least able to pay (including the unwaged) may be enabled to benefit from guidance services provided under discretionary powers and for which charges will, almost inevitably, be made.

NIACE welcomes pilot initiatives in assessment credits, but is concerned at their limited nature and their focus on those currently in employment. We believe that employers have a direct interest in providing such services for their own workforce. Entry to learning is directly assisted by TEC developments under the 'Gateways to Learning' initiative, and individual TECs' promotion of adult credits. The recent injection of resources into library-based services is also welcome.

NIACE also urges that the successful telephone helpline pioneered during Adult Learners' Week 1992 with the invaluable support of the BBC should be made a permanent and, indeed, statutory feature of the system. A combination of mass communication, instant initial access and a local service will bring many thousands of previously uncommitted adults back into contact with education and training services.

5.6 Improving the Quality of Provision

It is important to develop a culture which accepts and fosters investment in adult learning and NIACE regrets the absence of references to adult learning in the recent draft Citizen's Charter Performance Indicators issued by the Audit Commission. These refer to measures of satisfaction with local government services but do not include educational opportunities for adults. It is also regretted that current inconsistencies in data collection make meaningful comparisons between services and localities difficult if not impossible; this will hinder attempts to plan improvements.

NIACE welcomes the spread of total quality management approaches to continual improvement, based on and further developing the capabilities of all involved in an organisation. We wish to see a more rapid acceptance of quality principles in all sectors, and urge the FEFCs to set tough criteria for quality assurance systems in their sectors. There is also need for local authorities and other providers to give more attention to quality assurance processes suited to the education and training of adults. HMI's conclusions that 'monitoring and evaluation are generally weak', that 'there is often little systematic monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning' and that adult education is 'a sector largely devoid of systems for quality assurance' (HMI, 1991) are obviously a cause of serious concern. Resources should be redirected to ensure that the quality of the learning experience is checked, assured and developed. Quality systems should be implemented which require the regular preparation of action plans underpinned by a strong focus on customer feedback.

5.7 Improving Access

Timing, location and physical accessibility of opportunities are all factors which affect adult participation in learning activities. Learner support

services must be developed further, while all providers should consider how they could make their provision more flexible. Outreach activities, work-based and work-place learning all need to be expanded, and greater use of open and distance learning will be needed. Without these ingredients, the adult participation rates needed to achieve NETTs for lifetime learning will not be reached.

5.8 Equal Opportunities

NIACE believes that the fundamental issue to be addressed in any expansion of learning amongst the adult population is 'who participates?'. We have consistently argued that all providers of education and training should be able to assess the extent to which provision is being taken up by people in the communities served, and take measures to redress any inequity. Monitoring by age, gender, ethnicity, disability and location (by postcode) should be a regular activity. Employers should also assess the extent to which learning opportunities are being taken up by employees, full- and part-time, junior and senior, hourly-paid and salaried, and by those with different lengths of service with the organisation. Only by identifying gaps in current uptake will those designing learning programmes be able to target specific development activities at groups currently under-represented in lifetime education and training.

Funders of education and training should be encouraged to develop mechanisms which reward recruitment from currently under-represented groups in the workforce or community. This can be achieved via a variety of means, including targeted programmes, earmarked funding and premium payments for enrolments from priority groups. Providers also need to recognise the cultural traditions of particular learners, and be prepared to consider specific provision (e.g. women-only courses) in response. Consideration should be given to individuals with particular needs, such as language support or specialist equipment, and the physical accessibility of provision for those with motor disabilities. Only by providing such facilities will learning opportunities be available on an equitable basis.

5.9 Financial Incentives for Training

Adults need to feel that they are entitled to learn. It is important that negotiations on employees' reward packages involve consideration of education, training and development opportunities, and a further expansion of employee development programmes should be regarded as a short-term goal. A paid entitlement to 30 days' study a year, accompanied by a further 30 days' unpaid study leave, should be the aim.

It is imperative that a coherent national policy is developed which eradicates inter-departmental ambiguities over financial support for those pursuing education and training opportunities. Current restrictive policies on student support need to be reviewed with the purpose of making support more widely available to all those who wish to study, not just those following particular courses, attending full-time or falling into a particular age group. Reimbursement of the direct costs of study (such as those incurred in

transport or childcare) currently met for unemployed people undertaking Government-sponsored training programmes needs to become more widely available. Current tax incentives relating to education and training leading to NVQ Level 3 qualifications should be extended to cover all formal certificated learning activity. Employers need direct encouragement and incentives to establish earmarked budgets for HRD activity equivalent to at least 1.2% of net wage costs, and to be prepared to invest in the learning and development of all their employees.

Such measures will have a cost to employers, Government and individuals. Without this investment in the development of the nation's human capital, however, NIACE believes the NETTs for lifetime learning will remain elusive. We therefore believe that, should voluntary investment be unforthcoming, the government should be prepared to consider a statutory payroll levy to ensure sufficient and equitable employer investment in a learning workforce.

5.10 Monitoring Performance

Individual organisations should monitor their performance as part of their review of HRD plans. Within a locality, TECs should take a lead in setting local targets, and in monitoring achievement. On a national sectoral basis, ITOs have a significant role and overall the National Training Task Force should monitor progress towards NETTs on an annual basis. Performance review should not, however, be seen as an end in itself, or merely a check on current progress. Findings should be used to redirect resources if interim targets are not achieved, or to stretch the targets if progress is greater than the standard set. The NETTs, and associated local targets for participation and achievement in education, should be regarded as dynamic, capable of being extended into new areas and to new levels, in the light of progress achieved. By seeking continual improvement in the effective investment in human resources, Britain will develop into a 'learning society'.

6 Recommendations for Action

The central theme of this paper has been the need to expand participation in education and training by adults, especially those who have benefited least from educational opportunities in the past. The following recommendations for action are designed to help bring this expansion about. Many inter-relate and overlap. No single measure will be sufficient in itself to secure the cultural change necessary to make Britain a learning society, but taken together and accompanied by a real increase in investment in education and training by individuals, employers and Government, NIACE believes these will do much to translate the NETTs into reality.

The opening set of recommendations have general application. Those which follow, targeted at specific audiences, are limited to what NIACE believe to be the key actions which need to be taken in the next 12 months. If these points are not addressed promptly, legislation may in some cases be necessary in order to achieve the National Education and Training Targets for Lifetime Learning. This final section concludes with a series of measures which might be the subject of future legislation.

6.1 General Recommendations

Co-operation between employment sector agencies, TECs, education and training providers, professional bodies, voluntary organisations, national and local government will be needed to achieve the expansion in adult learning which will be required if the NETTs for lifetime learning are to be achieved. Each of these bodies, independently and in partnership, should:

- formally endorse the NETTs for Lifetime Learning
- prepare an action plan outlining strategies for the achievement of targets
- promote an awareness of the benefits to be derived from participation in education and training
- actively support national initiatives to raise the profile of adult learning (such as Adult Learners' Week)
- develop existing processes for identifying education and training needs within the (employed and unemployed, paid and unpaid) workforce and, where possible, the population at large
- develop additional educational opportunities for people temporarily outside the active workforce
- promote the development of more accessible provision of education and training opportunities for adults, both with regard to location and timing
- take steps to develop practical learner support services to overcome barriers to adult participation in education and training
- promote and develop methods of assessment and formal recognition of

learning achievement, including the Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning

- support the introduction of a training profile/record for all adults, which can link to the National Record of Achievement
- develop and promote collaborative networks between providers of education and training, to facilitate progression and mobility of learners.

6.2 Key Short-Term Action Points

NIACE believes that, within the next twelve months:

GOVERNMENT should

- re-consider provisions of the Trade Union Reform and Employment Rights Bill and any subsequent legislation which would limit the scope of and access to advice on careers, education and training for adults
- promote a coherent and comprehensive qualification system based on a credit framework which is able to take account of academic, NCVQ and OCN accreditation
- co-ordinate and rationalise educational awards and the welfare benefits system, including extending HE student loans to students over the age of 50 and those studying part-time; introducing student loans in FE for full and part-time students; instructing benefit offices to use the '21-hour' concession to *encourage* unemployed people to study; ending the 'six month rule' for unemployed people taking up training opportunities
- give practical financial support to the establishment of a permanent national telephone helpline for advice on training and education.

TECs should

- promote the development of local Employee Development Schemes which bring new sources of funding into general education and training programmes
- promote the development of in-company advice and guidance centres (and the development of links with careers services and LEA-supported EGSAs)
- introduce or further develop initiatives specifically targeted at recruiting previously under-represented people into education and training, including adult learning credits and entitlements.

EMPLOYERS should

- establish systems for undertaking a regular skills audit of all staff and then preparing an annual education and training

statement as part of their business planning; make a formal commitment to IiP

- set a specific, earmarked budget for employee training and development of no less than 1.2% of annual nett wage costs

- examine the feasibility of establishing an Employee Development Scheme for the company or, in collaboration with others, under the umbrella of the local TEC.

TRADES UNIONS should

- identify education and training as an essential part of reward packages when negotiating with employers

- promote and take practical steps with management to introduce employee development initiatives which provide a learning entitlement for all employees.

FUNDERS OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING should

- recognise the costs associated with the provision of part-time and open and distance learning opportunities, and fund them equitably

- devise funding strategies which reward recruitment from traditionally non-participant groupings.

PROVIDERS OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING should

- set targets for the numbers and kinds of adult learners they intend to serve in the light of consideration of their strategy to contribute to the achievement of NETTs

- establish systems of APEL and assessment on demand, leading on to individual action planning backed by impartial guidance

- establish systems of pre-course, on-course and post-course personal counselling and tutorial support for all adult students

- conduct an audit of their staff in respect of skills, knowledge and attitudes in the field of adult learning and establish staff development mechanisms to support those unaccustomed to an adult student body.

BROADCASTERS should

- co-operate with Government agencies and others in the establishment and promotion of a permanent national training and education helpline.

6.3 Proposed Legislation in the Absence of Action

As learning is imperative for the UK's future economic prosperity and social cohesiveness, NIACE believes that Government should closely monitor the steps taken to act on the above issues. Should voluntary progress be inadequate, it may be necessary to introduce legislation. This should be an option of last resort, but may need to include the following measures:

- the introduction of a statutory learning entitlement to the value of 30 hours' paid study leave per year plus 30 hours' unpaid leave per year for every person in the 16–65 age range not in full time education; legislation should be backed by cash-limited government funding, to supplement employers' existing and expanded training budgets, with criteria to be applied in the case of over-subscription to give support to individuals whose personal circumstances indicate they have had least opportunity to benefit from initial education
- the introduction of a payroll levy requiring all firms to spend a minimum of 1.2% of wage costs on human resource development activity, or to contribute this amount to TEC budgets for the purchase of training and development
- the expansion of current tax relief for employer investment in training to include those being supported to study 'out of house'
- the expansion of tax credit for study. The current entitlement should be extended to relate to all purposeful study, not be limited to that leading to NVQs. Tax credit should also be available in respect of some other elements of the cost of study (e.g. childcare, travel costs above a certain limit) as well as tuition fees.

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NIACE, the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education, is the national organisation representing the interests of everyone concerned with adult learning. It is active in research, development, publications, seminars, conferences and in organising Adult Learners' Week. NIACE works closely with colleges, TECs and employers, as well as with local authorities and national government. NIACE plays a central role in advising on developments in policy and practice in all forms of education and training for adults, promoting equal opportunities of access for all.

NIACE, 19b De Montfort Street,
LEICESTER LE1 7GE.
Tel: 0533 551451 Fax: 0533 854514

Company registration number 2603322
Charity registration number 1002775

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